

**INTROSPECTION 1. WHERE I AM AND WHERE I GO**

Objective: Students will be able to reflect on their social background and how it can influence their life plan in order to have a clear idea of the decisions they will have to make to accomplish that plan.

WARM UP

Write the words *social context* on the board and elicit their meaning from students. Try to get as many answers or definitions as possible and write the students' ideas on the board. If necessary, complement their definition by saying that social context is the physical and social setting in which people live, and that it includes their culture and the people and institutions they interact with. You may ask them why they think it is important to take our social context into consideration when defining our life goals.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- 2 Get students into pairs and direct their attention to the graphic organizer in the handout. Explain they should analyze the aspects of their social context that can influence their life plan. Explain to them that their social context is everything that plays or will play a part in their life plan. For example, if they live in a different place to where they want to study, if they have or lack certain resources, or the support they receive from their family. Invite them to think of people, values, knowledge, etc. they consider a defining part of their social context and complete the graphic organizer.
- 3 Give students enough time to think which of the aspects they wrote in the organizer will help them achieve their life plan and which ones might work against it. Invite them to discuss the effect those social aspects have had in their life, whether it has been good or bad, or maybe something helpful depending on how they envision their future selves.

- 4 Ask students to make a drawing with them at the center, surrounded by the aspects they consider helpful from the graphic organizer to illustrate their ideas of a life plan. Have them display their drawings on a classroom wall. Ask some volunteers to explain their drawings and share with the rest of the class how they see themselves in the future and how their social context can help them reach that future.

WRAP IT UP

- 5 *What are the advantages and disadvantages that the influence of the social context has in your life plan? Do you think you can change your social context or work towards its change to benefit your life plan?*

Give students some minutes to read and reflect on the questions. Then ask them to share their ideas with the whole class. Encourage students to think of how the social context can benefit their decisions or affect them. Ask them what changes they could make to transform their social environment into one that benefits their development. Provide examples of people who have influenced society positively.

TEACHING TIP

Try to relate the contents in your course to present and past social context with the purpose of expanding students' outlook. Make them aware of the effects the social context may have when making personal and professional decisions. Suggest that they talk to older people about decisions they have made and how they were influenced by the social context. Ask them whether any of their decisions were different from what other people expected from them.

**INTROSPECTION 2. MY VOCATION**

Objective: Students will be able to identify their vocation and the importance of having one.

WARM UP

Ask students what they wanted to be when they were little. Get as many answers as possible. Then ask them whether their decision has changed throughout the years and why. Point out that it doesn't matter whether their vocation has or hasn't changed. The important thing is to identify what they like and what they want for their future.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Have students read the introductory text of the handout. Explain the importance of the academic and professional areas and have students notice that it is vital they analyze their skills, interests, and values when deciding what to do in the future.
- 2 Invite students to think about what they want to study and what profession they would like to choose. Ask them to fill in the graphic organizer in the handout. Explain that they need to think of their personal qualities, the classes they are good at, skills such as *problem solving*, or *team building*, etc. Then get students into pairs and have them share their graphic organizers. Encourage them to exchange ideas about their skills and tell each other what skills they recognize in their partners. Point out it is essential to identify their skills so they can make responsible decisions and to research the options they have in different fields of study.
- 3 Now, ask them to make a list of their life goals. Give them time to compare what they want to be with the information in the organizer, and their life goals. Ask them to see if all three go accordingly to their vocation and their future plan. Point out the importance of having clear and aligned all these aspects.

WRAP IT UP

- 4 *Why do you think it is important to identify your skills? Is it important to research career and job options in different areas of study before deciding? Why? Where would you research?*

Ask the questions one by one and invite some volunteers to share their answers with the class. Discuss the importance of knowing themselves and what they want for their life plan. Explain that it is important to identify these aspects since this will allow them to strengthen the skills and / or knowledge they need to achieve their goals. Finally, ask students to share what they know about the professional areas they would like to develop in. Provide ideas about where to research career options.

TEACHING TIP

Relate the contents and activities in your course to your students' vocation interests. This will turn their learning meaningful and motivate them. Suggest that students research options to accomplish their academic and professional goals. Tell them they can talk to people who work in the areas they are interested in to find out what they like and don't like about their job, what difficulties may arise, and what piece of advice they can give them.

**INTROSPECTION 3. FOCUSED THINKING**

Objective: Students will be able to foster critical thinking skills in order to make the best decisions in any kind of situation.

WARM UP

Ask students to sit up comfortably in their places. Then ask them to close their eyes. Tell them to be quiet and focus on their breathing. Give them instructions while they are doing it: *Breathe in, breathe out.* Use a calm, soft tone of voice. Ask them to focus on their breathing, and on how their stomach and chest move. Tell them to clear their minds and not to think in anything else but their breathing. Let the exercise go on for 5–10 minutes. Then ask them how hard it was to clear their minds from feelings and thoughts and to focus on one simple thing. Explain that when they make decisions, it is very important to focus on the solution. That way they will be able to discriminate the alternatives that won't lead them to a good decision.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- 2 Ask students to get into groups. Have students read Jane's situation and ask them to discuss the questions. Tell them that sometimes feelings of despair, anger, or any other negative feelings can get in the way of making reasonable decisions. Ask some volunteers to share their answers with the class. Explain that if we don't want our decisions to be influenced by our emotions, fears, etc., we should focus on the actual situation and come up with reasoned choices.
- 3 Then, still in groups, tell them to exchange ideas about possible alternatives to the situation. Have them notice that the main idea is to think of options which are not tainted by Jane's negative feelings at that moment. Give them enough time to come up with three

different alternatives and to write their conclusions in the handout. Invite some volunteers to share their answers with the class.

WRAP IT UP

- 4 *Have you ever faced a situation where you had to make up your mind quickly and decide what to do? Were you able to analyze the situation and make the best decision? Or did your emotions and prejudice get in the way? Why do you think it is important to focus your mind and think in a clear way to solve a problem?*

Give students time to discuss the questions in small groups, and then elicit answers from the class. Invite as many volunteers as possible to share their personal experiences. Have them notice this is an example of a situation in which our self-control and focused thinking play an important part and help us make better decisions. Remind students of the breathing exercise they made at the beginning of the session and tell them that taking a moment to breathe and focus on what is important will allow them to clear their head of distractors such as negative feelings, prejudices, etc.

TEACHING TIP

Remind students of the importance of managing emotions and of what they learned in previous courses about self-regulation and handling emotions. Ask them to compare personal situations in which they were ruled by negative feelings in the heat of the moment and made hasty decisions, and others in which they focused their thoughts before choosing a course of action. Have them assess the results they got in both decisions and think of what they would have done differently in the first ones to achieve a better outcome.

**INTROSPECTION 4. HEAD AND HEART**

Objective: Students will be able to balance the rational and emotional factors when making decisions.

WARM UP

Write the words *critical thinking* on the board and elicit their meaning from students. If needed, help them by explaining that critical thinking relates to the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information in an objective manner and make a reasoned judgment before acting. You may write some aspects involved in critical thinking on the board: *Identify alternatives and arguments related to it. Evaluate a point of view or alternative to identify whether it's valid or not. Identify weak points in the alternative or argument. Provide reasoning and support for an argument or alternative we choose.*

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Have students read the introductory text silently.
- 2 Get students into pairs. Invite them to read the situation and look at the things Bruno considered to make up his mind. Have students notice how he classified the elements in his decision. Give them time to discuss whether Bruno's decision was balanced or not. Ask them to think about Bruno's final goal and if the aspects he considered will help him achieve it.
- 3 Ask students to think about a personal situation that requires making a decision (it can be something simple, not necessarily a big life decision). Tell them to write it down and make a list of all the things they have to take into account before making it.
- 4 Invite students to use the list from Step 3 and to balance the emotional and the rational aspects involved in the situation they chose. Then ask them to get into pairs and give them some minutes to share their information,

discuss if their reasons are balanced, and exchange ideas on how they can balance their reasons.

WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Why do you think it is important to balance your head and your heart when making decisions? Why do you think critical thinking is important in our lives? How can it help you make better decisions?*

Get students into groups and have them read the questions. Have groups discuss their answers for some minutes. You may point out that when we make decisions only with our heart, we let our emotions and desires rule over our reason, and when our decisions are based only on what our head tells us to do, we rationalize without letting feelings or personal wishes have a saying in our choices. The best alternative is to balance both sides. Invite students from different groups to share their answers with the class.

TEACHING TIP

You may suggest that students share their lists with a friend or relative and ask for their opinion. Tell them they can ask anyone they choose to write down his / her own reasons and feelings if he / she were faced with that specific situation. Learning other people's points of view can help us see some aspects we hadn't considered at first, but which are relevant to our decision.